

Barrier-Free Kids: An Integrative Approach to Speech Therapy using Theatre

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

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Abstract

Barrier-Free Kids is a program designed for high functioning children on the autism spectrum. The program was designed to work with children between the ages of 8-13 who have a disability that affects their social and cognitive language skills. *Barrier-Free Kids* is a 10-week program that builds on personal awareness, social interactions, and communication skills through theatre. The program culminates in a performance of an original play that combines internal awareness, external exchange, and creative expression. *Barrier-Free Kids* is an engaging, empowering, and stimulating program that combines the arts and speech-language therapy to achieve growth with clients in a creative, contextualized environment. This program proposal can aide in implementing this program and used as a reference when presenting to a school board, grant board, or organization to gain support for the development of a similar program in the future.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Melissa McGrath for advising me through this project and being a constant support through this process. I would also like to Tracena Marie for her mentorship and for being a role model of serving others with love. Lastly, I would like to thank the Lord, my family, and friends for being my support system and encouraging me to be fearless in the pursuit of what sets my soul on fire.

"I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being." ~Oscar Wilde

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Process of Analysis Statement

My first encounter with the power of speech pathology was with a first grade student. This little girl was selectively mute and came to public school after being homeschooled. There was no way for the teachers to gauge her language skills because she would not communicate with anyone. I started working with the student and tried to help her build confidence by encouraging her to share her voice with us. By the end of the year, the girl walked up to the microphone, during her first grade play, and told an auditorium full of people her name and what she wanted to be when she grew up. I knew in that moment I wanted to be involved in the process of helping people gain confidence to communicate with the world. As an eighth grade student, I did not know this powerful moment of someone communicating for the first time on the stage would be symbolic of the focus of my whole undergraduate career.

I came to college wanting to study speech pathology, but I also desired to incorporate my love of the arts into my future profession. I discovered a drama therapy group for adults with disabilities at Muncie Civic called Barrier-Free and became a volunteer. The goal of the group was to empower the actors, create a supportive community, and expose them to the arts. In the beginning, I doubted that we would be able to put on a full show for the community in five months with every actor delivering lines, but I was proven wrong. After going through the rehearsal process, it became clear that theater was an excellent outlet for growth in speech, but specifically in the area of social communication. It was an environment with opportunities to interact socially with language in script and conversation.

This newfound love of drama therapy in conjunction with speech therapy drove me to create my own undergraduate major through the Medallion Scholar Program. Combining speech pathology, theatre education, and psychology classes, this Applied Theatre major blended all the areas together that I loved. For my honors thesis project, I chose to work with a drama therapist to create my “dream program” called Barrier-Free Kids. Tracena, the drama therapist, wanted to adapt the Barrier-Free adult program and when she told me about her idea I thought it would be beneficial to add a language component and work on social communication skills with kids. Barrier-Free Kids is designed to be an engaging, empowering, and stimulating program that combines the arts and speech-language therapy to achieve growth with clients in a creative, contextualized environment. Barrier-Free Kids is a 10-week program that builds on personal awareness, social interactions, and communication skills through theatre. The program was designed to work with children between the ages of 8-13 who have a disability that affects their social and cognitive language skills. The program culminates in a performance of an original play that combines internal awareness, external exchange, and creative expression.

Tracena Marie and I piloted the program in the Fall of 2017. We had 5 participants that we met with for 2 hours once a week. Each session consisted of a check-in, warm-up, language activity, and drama activity. I decided to write this program proposal after running the pilot program in the fall. I wanted to create an aide that could be used in the future to gain support and funding from a school board, grant board, or organization. This program includes literature support, reflection on the program that was piloted, and a new program outline based on the original pilot program and revisions. This program is

designed to fill the literature gap in follow-up studies and multiple trials run with the same program . Barrier-Free Kids is a detailed program plan, which will allow it to be replicated.

The process of writing this program was challenging. This program was developed from scratch, so we had to create the sessions and lesson plans. Also finding participants to join the program was a challenge since this was our first year running the program. I think that now since the program has been established it will be easier to gain participants and we can continue to revise the sessions. This program was interactive and flexible, so one of the challenges was turning it into a narrative style writing.

This project is the culmination of my undergraduate experience. Starting with my love of speech therapy and the discovery of drama therapy, to developing my own major that blended speech pathology, psychology, and theatre together, and finally to developing this program. All have been building blocks that have lead to me finding my vocation. My hope is that this program will allow for others to have a foundation to start their own Barrier-Free Kids program or at least discover the benefits of using the arts with speech therapy. This program would not have been possible without the Muncie community and all of my mentors. I realized that you have to be fearless in the pursuit of what sets your soul on fire. I found that I didn't have to settle, but could find a way to combine all the things that bring me joy.

Barrier-Free Kids: An Integrative Approach to Speech Therapy using Theatre

Literature Review

According to the CDC, the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) amongst children is 1 in 68 (Center for Disease Control, 2016). Because of its high prevalence, ASD program funding, intervention, and establishments of programs that help these individuals lead a fulfilling life has been identified as a priority area for funding (Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee, 2011). Children diagnosed with ASD usually have deficits in the areas of nonverbal communication such as eye contact, reading facial expressions, and using gestures to support speech. Deficits in verbal communication such as maintaining reciprocal conversation or understanding language are often seen. There is also usually a stimulation component, which can result in specific behaviors such as hand flapping, pacing, or messing with a trinket (Benson, 2016).

Social Communication Skills are an area of deficit not only in ASD diagnosis but also with a Social Communication Disorder diagnosis. These two diagnoses present themselves similarly but cannot be diagnosed in conjunction with one another. Social communication involves social interaction, social cognition, pragmatics, and language processing, which are all areas that are needed for success in any job or academic setting (Speech Language and Hearing Association, n.d.). The area of pragmatics within social communication is acknowledged as the most consistently impaired area of communication and it also one of the complex areas of language. Pragmatics is the most socially driven aspect of communication. Knowing how to respond appropriately in social situations can be challenging for children on the autism spectrum because they struggle to perceive other people's emotions or read nonverbal communication (Eigsti, de Marchena, Schuh, & Kelley,

2011). In order to improve in the area of social language, children need to be given opportunities to engage in them.

One approach that has gained popularity is drama therapy or drama-based intervention. Drama-based intervention has been identified as a structured approach that can help children on the spectrum to engage in a social world through enjoyable activities (Peter, 2003). Theatre in intervention has been reported promising for addressing socialization deficits with children on the autism spectrum because of its ability to rehearse realistic social interactions in a low-stress environment (Kim, Stemberge, Lawrence, Torres, Miodrag, Lee, & Boyns, 2015). There have been several groups that have started that address social skills for children with ASD. Some of those current theatre intervention models will be overviewed.

The Hunter Heartbeat Method is a drama-based intervention program developed by Kelly Hunter that aims to work areas of social communication. Fourteen individuals with ASD participated in this program for 10 weeks and comparisons of pre and posttests showed improvements in areas of social skills, pragmatics, and communication as a whole. The program was a series of drama games that followed the plot line of *The Tempest* by Shakespeare. The drama games focused on areas such as turn-taking, social improvisation, pragmatics, and facial emotion recognition. The setup consisted of a 1:1 ratio of facilitators to children, which allowed for repeated practice. The program was set up in a predictable format to alleviate anxiety associated with what was happening next. The measures of this study were based off information gathered using the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Rating Scale (parent report), Penn Facial Recognition, Test of Pragmatic Language and a social validity question. There was no control group in this experiment and the sample size was

small so a larger test group would need to be implemented to generalize these results (Mehling, Tasse, & Root, 2016).

SENSE theatre program was started by Blythe Corbett at Vanderbilt. They are conducting research to see if children with ASD could improve their social skills by participating in community theatre. One of her first studies observed eight children with ASD who performed in Disney's *The Jungle Book Kids* at a local community theatre after a three month process. These participants showed an increase in the Theory of Mind and were provided with an environment where they could engage in social situations which takes performance-based approach to treatment instead of a knowledge-based approach (Hartigan, 2012). Theory of Mind is the ability to navigate social situations by understanding that others have different beliefs and viewpoints than oneself (Thompson, 2017). Speech Bubbles Project aimed at getting children with communication difficulties to communicate more by acting out stories that they had created. At the end of the sessions, two participants would tell a story to a facilitator who would then create a cohesive storyline that the participants would act out at the next session. Children want to communicate a story they create. The children individually showed improvement in behavior, confidence, emotional engagement, empathy, fluency, turn-taking, vocabulary, longer interactions, and the kids reported enjoying the program (Barnes, 2014).

An intervention group called the 'Socio-Dramatic Affective-Relational Intervention' (SDARI) met with a small group of children with ASD for a six-week summer program that met for 5 hours everyday. The group focused on performance-based social skills, relationship building, and finding motivation. The facilitators used a variety of assessments including parent reports, behavior scales, and a depression scale. This set a baseline for

post treatment comparison .This is one of the first studies to have a control group comparison. After the program, there was a significant increase in emotion detection and social assertion. This results stayed consistent even 6-weeks after the trial so generalizability occurred. There was also positive feedback from the parents of the participants expressing how much their child liked the program (Lerner, Mikami, & Levine, 2011).

The last program to discuss is the Theatre and Therapy Project. This project was an exploratory study that combined speech therapy and drama. The goal was to administer therapy in real-life conditions that helped to generalize skills to different situations opposed to typical service-delivery model which takes place in a decontextualized environment. The authors reported that theatre was a perfect medium for speech pathologist to embed goals in a motivating and meaningful environment. The results of this study were based on direct and video observations of personal growth for the participants. Observations were written and recorded as well as clients were given opportunities to reflect on the process. Parents reported generalized skills and overall confidence increase which is important to enhance communication (Losardo et al., 2016).

Feedback was investigated regarding the Roundabout drama therapy sessions in schools using the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. The Roundabout program is a drama therapy program that consists of a wide array of healthcare professionals with a specialism of working with adults and children on the autism spectrum. Their sessions focus on areas such a social communication improvement, mental health and self-esteem improvements, and creativity opportunities. Themes emerged through analysis regarding feeling more included, feeling safe, parent support, and social skill confidence (Godfrey &

Haythorne, 2013). This same group of professionals developed an evaluation measurement that can be used in drama therapy sessions called PSYCHLOPS Kids. Through adult support children are asked to fill the form out pre-therapy and post therapy and an analysis of children's answers are evaluated. This gives the children in therapy a voice and also can help know where to start in the therapeutic process. The form is kid friendly with areas to draw and faces to identify feelings. This evaluation is not normed but it does show promise in addressing the efficacy of drama therapy for children (Haythorne, Crawford, & Godfrey, 2012).

It is important to focus on the self-esteem and empathy of children with autism because this is another element that allows them to make and maintain friendships. A five-week inclusive theatre program was put on in collaboration with the Miracle Project and Teenage Drama Workshop. Typical and atypical students participated in meetings five days a week for four hours. They created an original musical called *Joining the Spectrum* and pre program to post program intervention observation showed significant increase in areas such as empathy, comfort with others, and trust. This program prided itself on being inclusive and involved both neurotypical peers and children with ASD (Kim et al., 2015). For children with ASD, establishing peer relationships is an important part of social growth (Hall and Isaacs, 2011).

Many other studies have been done but most included small experimental groups and lacked a control group so the results were found insignificant or could not be generalized due to lack of control group. Measurement of social skills intervention requires multi-informant, multi-method, multi-dimensional approach (Learner et al., 2011). Because of this, data is challenging to collect due to a lack of formal assessment that really captures

all aspects of this multi-dimensional area of communication. There is also a lack in studies that address post-treatment skill maintenance or ability to generalize skills learned in treatment to the everyday interactions (Rao, Beidel, & Murray, 2008; White, Keonig, & Scahill, 2007).

All the above discussed programs, while varied, are examples of programs that are using theatre to enhance social communication skills. None of the programs are detailed in their session layout and therefore cannot be replicated. The discussed programs do not have follow-up studies that discuss these programs after multiple trials in more groups. These programs are also done with small groups and are only reported on once, so no results can be generalized.

The arts enhance people's lives. Results of participants in theatre programs showed an increase in quality of life. People with disabilities are constantly in environments where they are told what they are unable to do and theatre is an environment where these same people are able to do many things. Participants in theatre are encouraged to express themselves verbally, through movement, and emotions. Some of the areas that drama helps to develop include: listening, body awareness, physical expressiveness, facial expression, focus and concentration, memory enhancement, social interaction and joy (Bailey, 2010). Strengths are highlighted in the theatre and accommodations can always be made.

Reflection

In fall of 2018, I participated in a program called Barrier-Free Kids that was designed and put on by Tracena Marie, registered drama therapist with my assistance. We designed the program as a marriage between speech therapy and drama therapy. There are many elements of speech therapy that I thought could be aided by the clients' participation

with theatre. Drama therapy can be used in different capacities. It can be used to help people cope or work through traumatic experiences but it can also be used to build confidence, community, and communication. This is the area that I wanted to capitalize on. Previous programs that have been developed lacked any follow-up studies or the ability to replicate the study with another population. This program includes a detailed session description that will allow other people to replicate the program. This will allow for multiple trials to be run to test the efficacy of this program. Development of social communication skills was my initial focus. Skills such as reciprocal conversation, eye contact, verbal inflection, nonverbal communication, voice tempo and volume. While going through the program, there were elements of cognitive language such as memory and attention that were addressed without me even realizing it. I added specific objectives to address these areas of language during renovations.

For this program, we had five participants between the ages of 9-13. There was one female and four males. All participants were on the autism spectrum and high functioning. They were all verbal but in varying degrees. We also had six volunteers each week that assisted with the program. This allowed for each participant to have a buddy and assist them when needed. The program occurred for ten consistent weeks in a community classroom with the eleventh week being a final performance. We met with the participants on Saturdays from 10-12.

The sessions would consist of an emotional check-in, warm-ups, a language lesson and then a drama lesson. About five weeks in, we started to focus on developing a short play that the participants would end up performing for friends and family on week eleven.

There was a pre and post survey that was given to the participant's family members to fill out. The pre-survey gave us insight on what areas the participants struggled in when it came to social skills and basic language skills. This allowed us to develop the programs sessions accordingly. There were few responses on the post- survey so it was hard to determine the effects the program had on language and social skills. Despite having limited post-survey information, all five participants seemed to have some degree of improvement in the areas of confidence, social interaction, inflection, expression, and movement. Participants were verbalizing more in the end sessions than they did in the beginning. Parents reported their child had a much happier demeanor after leaving drama class on the weekends and looked forward to coming each week.

Future Program Development

Upon reflecting on the program we facilitated, there were a few areas I saw that would make the program more effective. Some of them were out of our control while others could easily be fixed for this program in the future. One area for improvement was the duration of the program. It was hard to see large language improvements when we only saw the participants two hours for ten weeks. I think meeting with the participants twice a week for two hours would increase the impact the program has on everyday language. Tracena and I did not have access to any goals the participants were working on at therapies outside of this program. Specifically, I would have liked to have access to their language goals since most clients were seeing a speech pathologist or had in the past. One possible suggestion would be to acquire more background history and clinic goals from the child's therapists. Another possible solution would be to have the speech therapist the clients are seeing be one of the program facilitators. This is the solution that I would like to

implement when I run this program in the future. I intend to use this program in a school where I am also the speech therapist. This would allow me to know what language goals the participants are working on. Language goals could be addressed in therapy and also help form language activities for the week to make sure skills are being addressed that would best benefit the clients. I am currently not a registered speech therapist so this solution was not possible to execute during this pilot. I think in the future more language improvements could be identified if this program was in conjunction with weekly speech therapy.

Objective pre and post measurements would be another area of improvement to be addressed. There was not an opportunity for us to collect formal data to demonstrate the validity of this program; however, through observations all six of the participants showed areas of growth. The best way to track changes with the participants is by writing individual language goals for each one, establishing a basal, and recording if the client achieves these goals after intervention is complete. Social communication is a multi-dimensional aspect of language and there are few standardized tests that address all dimensions.

Program Proposal

This program proposal is based off the original Barrier-Free Kids program run in fall of 2017 by Tracena Marie and Elizabeth White along with revisions that were made upon reflection on that program. The exact program that is being proposed has never been piloted before.

Barrier-Free Kids is a ten-week drama therapy program focused on the improvement of social communication skills, creative expression, and emotional

awareness. This is done through the exploration of storytelling, puppetry and movement. This program is intended for children with physical and cognitive abilities between the ages of 8-13. The program was developed based off the original Barrier-Free Kids program that was discussed earlier. The participants meet once a week for two hours along with meeting once a week with a speech therapist. Sessions are broken up into three sections: movement warm-up, drama, and language/communication exercises. This program is designed for children with diagnosis such as autism, downs syndrome, ADHD etc.

Setting

The ideal location for this program would be a large open room with lots of floor space. It would nice to have a section the participants could sit and another area where they worked on performance and could move. Warm-ups should always take place while sitting in a circle to promote inclusion and equality. This also makes sharing easier. Assessment of client's nonverbal communication and behavior can be taken when all can be seen. When creating the setting for the play, keep it minimalistic. Scarfs or other small props may be used to identify characters and certain locations.

Assessment

Caregivers and the schoolteachers of the participants will be asked to fill out The *Gilliam Autism Rating Scale* (GARS-2) (Gilliam, 2013). This will provide foundational information on social interactions and communication deficits. If facilitator cannot administer this test, ask local speech therapist to administer it. A registration profile, speech survey, and exit survey will also be sent to parents to fill out (see Appendix A, B, &C). These surveys will allow the caregivers to be more narrative about their child. Answers from the registration profile and speech survey could help set up activities the

client's will enjoy. It also establishes the parent/caregivers largest areas of concern for the client. This information is especially helpful if medical history or therapy records cannot be accessed. The post survey shows growth or areas that lacked growth. The exit survey can also be used to improve the program for the next time. If child is currently or has attended speech therapy, assessment results should be reviewed to write therapy goals for the child for the duration of the program. The main form of assessment throughout the program will be in detailed observations taken during the sessions. Video recordings will be made for each session for review to ensure detailed notes are kept for each participant.

Volunteers

Volunteers are necessary in order for this program to succeed. The volunteers should have background working with children with disabilities unless whoever is running the program is willing to do training for people who want to volunteer but haven't worked with this population before. Consistency is also key. It is important the volunteers can make it to most (if not all) rehearsals. The participants will often get comfortable with the volunteers and it throws off their session if they are not there. Volunteers should arrive prior to rehearsal and plan to stay after briefly. Depending on the ratio of participants to volunteers, it would be ideal have a volunteer for each participant. If this is not possible, there should not be more than a 2:1 ratio. Most volunteers will be asked to participate in the play performance in some capacity, so it is important the volunteers are comfortable with performing.

Sessions

This outline is meant to compliment the Barrier-Free Session Plan found in Appendix D. It provides detailed explanation of activities from each session. Sessions may

need to be adjusted depending on the group participating in the program. Each session will begin promptly at start time to maintain a consistent schedule. The general layout of every session will be similar consisting of check-in, warm-up, main activity 1, snack/restroom break, main activity 2, and then closing. The song that is used in this program every session is the 'Hello There Song' (Appendix E). There is a 15-20 minute snack break implemented in each session to allow for personal sharing and a restroom break. The closing of the sessions brings all the kids back in a circle and they are given a creative task for the week. This creative task is homework the children do each week. The first five weeks the tasks involve them making something and bringing it back to share and the second five weeks the children are asked to focus on practicing their script in different ways. Finally the children all board the "Creative Express," which is a pretend train, and act out riding on the train to their parents.

It should be implied that these elements are done in each session even if they are not mentioned in the description.

Session #1- Making Connections Through Creativity

Objectives

1. *Participants will acknowledge group members and build rapport*
2. *Clinicians will encourage creative expression and imagination with the participants*

Rules

1. Please tell an adult if you need to use the restroom or step outside of the classroom.

2. Please listen to others when they are speaking. Respect one another.
3. Have fun and be expressive

“Hello There” Song: Demonstrate the song with another volunteer before asking clients to participate (see Appendix E for song). It is a call and response song.

Puppet Introductions: All participants then introduce themselves to a puppet and make a sound with the puppet. Example: Hi, my name is Evan. Zoop! All other participants and volunteers: Hi, Evan. Zoop!

Name Game: The children will then participate in a name game where they must roll the ball to a fellow group member and say their name. *This game addresses memory skills and turn taking.

Movement Activity: A warm-up movement activity assists in body awareness. Just play some music and have the client’s move how the music makes them feel.

Break: A small 15-minute snack and restroom break is taken. During snack, participants are encouraged to share stories from their days. This is time for free speech and sharing. Volunteers can engage the students in some initiating questions to elicit conversation (What did you do yesterday? Do you have a favorite movie?). Some kids might just want to eat without talking as well.

Drama Enactment: The story of the *Golden Nugget* by Norman Hinsdale Pitman is read to the participants. The participants are asked some predictive questions and also some retell questions. The participants then get on their feet and reenact the story that was just told. This can be done with some guidance by the drama therapist with scarves as props. This exploratory activity helps the clinician to establish a base for emotional, cognitive, and communication skills.

Closing: The closing of the session brings the students back to their circle seats. Creative Notebooks are passed out and a creative task is assigned to help with continuity between sessions. The first week the creative task is to decorate the outside of their notebook and draw a picture or write how they felt about the first week of theatre. Emotional cue cards are also sent home with the participants as a reference (Appendix F). The participants were then taken out to their parents promptly on time by climbing aboard the "Creative Express." The volunteers and participants get in a line and act out being on a train to go and meet their parents. This is a creative and effective way to move from one location to another.

Session # 2- Feelings on the Inside

Objectives:

1. *Participants will acknowledge group members and build rapport.*
2. *Participants will explore and discuss listening to their bodies (sensations and feelings)*

Check-In with puppet: Participants will tell how they are feeling to a puppet that is passed around. This brings awareness to internal emotions and learning how to express them to another.

"Hello There Song:" This week visual aids will be added with sign language to the "Hello There Song". This will help the participants remember the words and the order of the words.

Movement Warm-Up: the participants get to engage in an emotion dance warm-up. Music will be played and the participants, along with their buddies, will move according to the emotion presented to them (angry, happy, sad, etc.).

Drama exercise: This exercise will address emotions through narrative storytelling. Have the participants help create a story giving them prompting questions. For example: There are two friends. What are their names? The king and queen are looking for something. What are they looking for? This will allow participants to take creative ownership of the story and add in elements of their own interest.

Drama Exercise Part 2: Part 2 will be a continuation of the first part narrative storytelling. Have the participants act out the story that they have come up with. The clinician should narrate the story that has been created so the participants only have to focus on how to express the story through their bodies. The participants can repeat dialogue that the clinician gives to them.

Closing: Have the participants pass the silly face. One person will start and share a silly face with the person beside them and the person must copy that silly face to the best of their ability and pass it onto the next person. The creative task for this week is to write about an animal that is seen throughout the week.

Session #3-Verbal and Nonverbal Skills

Objectives:

1. *Participants will be able to engage in reciprocal communication*
2. *Participants enhance their social skills and emotional intelligence via puppetry and pretend play with partners.*

****This session begins with an extension to last session.**

Check-In: The participants pass around a puppet and tell a story, ask the puppet how it is feeling and then responds as if they were the puppet.

Movement Warm-Up: The movement warm-up is an animal exploration.

Numerous animals are called out and the participants are asked to move around the room like said animal. This relates back to the creative task they were asked to do for this session.

Speech Lesson: The first component of speech to explore is conversation and turn taking. This is important for the actors to learn developmentally and also is a crucial element when performing. This activity can be done by pairing up the volunteers with the participants. They are given a stone called the "speaking stone." This stone allows the children to have something physical to pass when taking a turn. The participants are asked to pass the stone back and forth with their partner three times. Each time they answer they must make a statement and ask a question. Start with a simple question and answer such as: My name is Susan. What is your name? Then for the last round have the students come up with the question to ask their partner.

Drama component: This lesson should focus around encouraging conversation with other group members while enacting a story. Participants will be encouraged to use a puppet and to create a character for the puppet. They can then go around the room and talk to other puppets and ask them questions. The clinician may also give each participant a different.

Closing: Each participant expresses how they feel via movement. All other participants and volunteers should copy and playback the movement. The creative task is revealed for the week and the clients are asked to draw a picture in their notebook that represents how they are feeling one day.

Session #4- Mind-Body Connections**Objectives:**

1. *Participants will learn how to take what they are thinking and express it in their movement*
2. *Participants will create a story using imagination and expression.*
3. *Participants will utilize reciprocal language skills in play-based exercises through questions to other participants*

Emotion Dance: Participants think about how they feel and express that with body movement. *This activity is the same as the closing activity from the previous session. This activity helps them gain an awareness of what is happening internally and put it into external expression. This will create a building block for them to express their emotions verbally.

Silly Aerobics: A client who is not as verbal but loves to move can lead this. Music is played from popular movies or that have an up beat and then everyone follows the moves of the leader. The leader can also be passed between participants and volunteers.

Express Yourself: Participants pair up and give them the carrier phrase, "Today I feel_____." It would be helpful to also give the participants emotional cue cards (see Appendix F). They can then look at the pictures and decide how they feel. Then have the clients think about how different situations make them feel. Depending on their cognitive level, the carrier phrase such as " I feel_____when I go to the pool" or the clients could be asked, "What is something that you do that makes you feel happy?" The most ambiguous statement would be, "Tell me something you do and how it makes you feel." The volunteers

should model these statements for the participants and also state the carrier phrase or ask the questions.

Creative Drama Enactment: First the clinician will narrate the story and then have the participants get on their feet and act it out. It would be wise to choose a story that had to deal with emotions in some way. Some suggestions would be *The Way I Feel* by Janan Cain or *The Feelings Book* by Todd Parr. It is important that the clinician breaks the story up into scenes that the participants can act out and add dialogue. Feel free to add simple props or colored scarfs to assist in expression if the participants are struggling with the dialogue or communication in general.

Closing: Deep breathing and kids yoga (Explore Cosmic Kids Yoga for examples) are great cool-down exercises. For the creative task the kids should ask family members or friends how they are feeling and draw a picture that depicts those feelings.

Session #5- Speakin' and Groovin'

Objectives:

1. *Participants will identify appropriate voice inflection to convey emotions*
2. *Participants will engage in appropriate tempo in their speech so others may understand them*
3. *Participants will enact a story trying to embody the character they are portraying*

Animal exploration: Participants are encouraged again to stimulate the imagination and to get clients in a space of creating through animal explorations. Name different animals and have the kids walk, talk, and act like the animals.

Vocal Inflection and Tempo Activity: Facilitator should write a sentence on a white board and then have the participants echo the sentences multiple times, putting the inflection on a different word each time (**She** loves chocolate. She **loves** chocolate. She loves **chocolate**). It is helpful to use hand motions to show the different levels of inflections. As the client's raise their voice have them raise their hand and move to different heights depending on their inflection. It is important to talk about emotions and what types of inflections will be used with different emotions. Then the participants can work on tempo of speech. Have them practice say a sentence really slow, medium speed, and really fast. The clinician should demonstrate the different speeds and ask the clients which speed is easiest to understand. It is important for participants to talk slow enough that others can understand them so have them repeat each speed multiple times to make sure the concept sticks.

Story Enactment: Facilitator should read the story *Mushroom in the Rain* by Mirra Ginsburg to the participants and or a similar book that encourages sharing and acceptance. After facilitator narrates the book, participants get on their feet and walk them through different scenes that they will act out with puppets.

Closing: Pass the high five. For the creative task, tell the participants to work on voice inflection when they talk to their family.

Session #6- Story Development

Objectives:

1. *Participants will generate ideas for the play when given prompts (See Appendix G for prompt)*

- 2. Participants will organize the story in correct sequence from beginning to end*

Check in with Puppet: The participants can tell the puppet how they are feeling today and give the puppet a high-five or hug.

Story Sequencing: This is a cognitive skill and if the children understand the story arch this can lead to better reading comprehension. Appropriate children's book can be read with picture cards that show the main ideas from the story. Have the children put these ideas in the order they occurred in the story. This is setting up a foundational skill for the kids to apply to the final performance script. This session should generate most of the ideas to base the script off of for the final play.

Mad Libs Story Activity and Enactment: Feel free to use a pre-generated mad libs or make an original one to give the kids a story outline they can put their ideas into. After they generate a story, have them practice telling what happens in the story while on their feet. The participants should act out the story they created with narrated prompts from the facilitator.

Closing: Pass the High Five. Creative task is telling their parents or friend a story before the next session.

Session #7- Reading Day (see example script in Appendix H)

Objectives:

- 1. Participants will participate in reading a script and will be assisted as necessary*
- 2. Participants will use a good volume when speaking their lines*
- 3. Participants will practice turn taking with movement passing*

Puppet Check-In: The participants should tell their puppet how they are feeling and also saying hello to the puppet with a hug or high five.

Pass the movement exercise: One participant will start and do some movements and everyone else will follow. Then they will initiate passing the positive energy to another member through some passing movement.

Main Activity 1& 2: The participants will be reading the script and working on cognitive skills. Before the participants read the script, have the volunteers read it out loud so the participants can hear what the story sounds like. The participants will then be encouraged to read as much as they can independently with the volunteers there to assist as needed. The participant's lines should challenge them but should not be impossible for them to say. If lines need to be adjusted to fit the client's needs, notes should be made, and then changes can be made before the next session.

*When creating the script is to make sure volunteers are included as some of the characters to be there to support the participants and help the story continue to move if the participants get lost. This reading will more than likely take most of the session depending on the amount of participants. It is important to take a break in the middle somewhere to ensure the clients do not lose focus.

Closing: Participants share something that they are looking forward to in the upcoming week. Encourage the clients to read over their script throughout the week as the creative task.

Session #8- Get on Your Feet

Objectives:

1. *Participants will engage in assisted script reading and be encouraged to make creative choices*
2. *Participants will support fellow peers through verbal and/or nonverbal affirmations.*

Main Activity #1: The script will need to be read through again because there has more than likely been changes since the last session. It is also good to help the participants practice their lines for memory.

Main Activity #2: This activity will be focused on putting the script on its feet. Slowly work through the script, pausing in each scene to allow participants time to read their lines and also give them a chance to think about how to show what they are saying through their bodies. Give the clients direction but also give ask them questions to help them make choices about their character. This will be a intricate process and take a while to work through. It is important to stop and start from the top as you keep adding new scenes to make sure the clients understand the sequence of events and for review. Do not plan on finishing the staging this week. Staging can be carried over into the next session. Make sure when staging that a minimalistic approach is taken. Less is better in this case and will help the participants not be over stimulated. Try to write or pick a short story that can be executed in spaces such as a classroom or therapy room. Use familiar objects and have the participants pretend they are something that they are not. Also use scarves to block out some of the different spaces and add color.

Closing: Clients will share an affirmation with another participant or volunteer. If they can make verbal affirmations encourage phrase such as: "Good job!" "You acted well today!" If the child is nonverbal encourage giving a high-five or thumbs up. Participants might get a little bogged down with running the script and going through details so it is

important to end on a positive note. Creative Task for the week is to work on line memorization and share what they learned with their family.

Session #9- Memory Time

Objectives:

- 1. Participants will receive strategies that help with memorization and sequencing*
- 2. Participants will follow directions and make creative choices on characters and staging*

Main Activity 1: This activity will be focused on reviewing what was staged last session and finishing staging for the end. Strategies are given to the clients to help them with memorization while working on staging. The facilitator works with the kids to help them come up with physical movement they can do while speaking their lines.

Main Activity 2: When staging is finished, the participants will recap what happens in the story they are telling. Have them answer questions about who is in the story and what they do. This will help them remember sequence of the story better. This is an effective strategy before and after the staging process. Another strategy to help with memorization is repetition. Any down time and when the kids go home they need to run lines over and over again.

Closing: The participants pass around the high five. The creative task for the week is to continue to review their scripts and think about speaking with good volume and expression.

Session #10- Body Language

Objectives:

1. *Participants will execute nonverbal communication to aid their verbal expressions*
2. *Participants will engage in the story being told for 20 minutes*

Warm-Up: Magic Wand Movement activity. Give one of the participants a wand and have them move the wand at different speeds and directions while pointing to different parts of the body. The leader can change or stay the same. Wizard music may be added for effect.

Main Activity 1: Read over the script with the kids having them move through generally where their staging was from last session with the help of the volunteers. This run is focusing on repetition and memorization.

Main Activity 2: This session focus on nonverbal expressions to aid their verbal expressions. Help the clients to remember the inflection exercises they did and ask prompting questions to help them think about the emotion behind what they are saying. Also ask the client-prompting questions to have them express what they are saying through their body as well. If that is too advanced for your kid, tell them what they are feeling and then have them think about what that feels like in their body. The emotions should be kept simple (e.g. mad, happy, sad). Have them play with speed, inflection, and gestures. Make sure to affirm clients when they use non-verbal communication or go above just delivering the lines. This will affirm the behavior and make the client want to repeat it. Moments can be rehearsed in the script where no words are said and only gestures or expressions are used. This is the final session where the student will have lessons.

Closing: The participants pass an affirmation (verbal or nonverbal) around the circle to fellow participants. For the creative task, encourage the students to continue practicing their script at home with family members.

Session #11- Finale- **this is the final performance**Objectives:**

1. *Participants will apply language techniques they have learned to performance*
2. *Participants will enact the story that has been rehearsed for an audience*

Warm-up: Run the 'Hello There' song multiple times with the kids to make sure they feel confident with it.

Dress Rehearsal: Review the whole show one time through giving lots of affirmations during this run to ease the nerves of the kids. Do not dwell on the details or fixing things unless they are simple, easy fixes.

Performance: Parents and family are invited to witness these kids share a story they have created. Things will go not as planned and it is important to continue to encourage and be ready to improvise.

Awards: For awards, each student receives a completion award or a special award (e.g. funniest, great inflection, best villain).

****This session is the closing so feel free to do whatever is necessary for closure.**

Conclusion

Programs such as this one show promise to integrate speech therapy and theatre together to positively impact the development of social communication skills for children on the autism spectrum. The purpose of this program proposal is to create a program outline for others to take and use to implement their own Barrier-Free Kids program. The review of literature on previous programs shows support for programs like this, while also showing the gap in literature with follow-up studies. This program has the ability to run

multiple trials on various groups to test the efficacy of the program. It also can be tailored to fit the needs of each participant. The information provided above can assist in gaining support for funding for this program from a school board or grant committee to fund a project like this. This program proposal is meant to act as a guide and was designed to be flexible so it could be altered to fit the needs of the children that it serves. Barrier-Free Kids is an opportunity to use the arts to create contextualized environments for children to engage in speech therapy and give them the confidence to communicate with the world.

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Appendix A

Barrier-Free Kids: Registration Profile

Barrier-Free Kids: Creative Expression for All Abilities (10-Week Drama Therapy Series)

Please join XX, as she goes on a journey to explore with puppetry, role-play, storytelling, and movement to enhance social skills and emotional growth by way of drama therapy techniques! The program is intended to support children 8 to 13 years of age with cognitive or physical disabilities.

Personal Information

Child's Name: *

Child's Age: *

Parent(s) Name: *

Primary Phone #

Secondary Phone #

Email Address:

Best way to reach you:

Please list your child's medical and allergy information that you feel is important to provide:

Do certain sensory stimuli impact your child - positively or negatively (ie: visual, auditory, tactile, vestibular)?

Please share some of your child's likes, dislikes, hobbies, taste in music, books, etc.

Please list any information regarding your child's physical, emotional, and/or behavioral health that you feel is relevant to your child's successful participation in the program:

The program's series includes 10 sessions. The total program cost is X. Does a payment plan need to be arranged?

Yes or No

Release of Liability * . I hereby consent that my child may participate in the Barrier-Free Kids Theatre program from XX-XX. I further state that I hereby release (organization), their staff, and student interns from any claim that the participant might have, or others may have, if he/she might sustain an injury during their participation with organization program.

I give my consent.

I do not give my consent.

Photo/Video Release. I hereby consent that my child may be photographed or recorded while participating in the Barrier-Free Kids Theatre program. The photos/videos may be used by XX for educational research, promotional, and grant writing purposes.

I give my consent.

I do not give my consent.

Social Skills Profile

Please respond to the following phrases regarding your child's skills, behaviors, and needs base your judgement on your observations of your child over the last 2-3 months). Your responses to the assessment remain confidential, and only shared with XX.

Please rank:

5- Very Often; 4- Often; 3- Sometimes; 2- Never; 1- Has yet to explore

1. Enjoys Stories with Pictures
2. Enjoys Drawing or Painting
3. Enjoys Singing
4. Enjoys Dancing
5. Engages in Pretend Play
6. Recognizes Facial Expressions of Others
7. Recognizes Nonverbal Cues, "Body Language" of Others
8. Maintains Eye Contact During Conversations
9. Verbally Expresses How He/She is Feeling
10. Responds to the Greetings of Others
11. Initiates Greetings with Others
12. Engages in One-On-One Social Interactions with Peers
13. Feels Comfortable Interacting with a Group of Peers
14. Invites Peers to Join Him/Her in Activities
15. Experiences Positive Peer Interactions
16. Exhibits Fear or Anxiety Regarding Social Interactions
17. Has Been Teased or Bullied By Peers
18. Engages in Socially Appropriate Behaviors
19. Changes the Topic of Conversation to Fit Self-Interests
20. Difficulty Transitioning to the Next Task/Activity
21. Exudes Confidence in Self

Appendix B

Speech/Language Skills Report- Barrier Free Kids

Please rate the following social communication skills according to your child's ability

1- Not present

2- Responds using no Words (non-verbal communication, gestures)

3-Responds most of the time with 1-3 Words

4- Responds most of the time with complex language (uses 3 or more words and complete sentences)

Questions

1. Makes polite requests
2. Makes choices
3. Gives descriptions of objects wanted
4. Expresses needs
5. Asks for help
6. Gives directions
7. Ask questions to gather more information
8. Can communicate simple retelling of a story told to them
9. Creates original story with logical events
10. Makes apologies or explanation for behavior
11. Compliments Others
12. Interacts with others in a polite manner
13. Uses appropriate social rules (greeting, farewells, thank you)
14. Is attentive to speaker

15. Initiates conversation
16. Listens and Follows Instructions
17. Maintains Conversation
18. Ends Conversation Appropriately
19. Expresses Humor/Sarcasm
20. Uses appropriate volume of voice
21. Uses appropriate eye contact
22. Uses facial expressions that are consistent with message
23. Uses appropriate distance and proximity when talking to someone
24. Uses appropriate physical contact when communicating with others
25. Takes turn in conversations
26. Avoids repeating information in conversation
27. Provides important information upon request (name, age, birthdate, address)

Please list any questions and comments you have from this survey. Thank you!

Appendix C

Barrier-Free Kids Theatre: Exit Survey

1- none at all----5 very confident

1. On a scale of 1 -5, how would you rate your child's confident in their ability to communicate with others through their experience with BarrierFree Kids Theatre?
2. Did you notice your child vocalizing (talking) more than their normal after coming home from Barrier-Free Kids' sessions? Yes or No. Please explain.
3. What improvements (if any) did you notice in your child's speech and expression of language? Please share.
4. What is one area of your child's communication would you still like to notice improvement in? Please check all that apply.
 - initiating conversation
 - reciprocal conversation
 - eye contact
 - vocal tone and inection
 - expression of feelings
 - understanding and responding appropriately to social cues of others
5. If there are any other areas of communication that you would like your child to improve on please list below:

6. What are areas of communication you observe in your child that he/she does well?
7. How interested are you in registering your child for Barrier-Free Kids next year?
 - Very Interested
 - Somewhat Interested
 - Not interested at all

Any other suggestions/comments? Please provide here.

Appendix D
Barrier-Free Kids- Series Plan

September 16th - Theme: Making Connections through Creativity

1. Participants will acknowledge group members and build rapport
2. Clinicians will encourage creative expression and imagination with the

10:00-10:20 Check-In

- Name Tags
- Ground Rules
- "Hello There" Song

10:20-10:50 Warm-Up(s)

- Puppet & Person Introduction
- Name Ball Game
- Movement Exercise

10:50-11:00 Break (Snack/Restroom)

11:00-11:45 Main Activity

- Story Telling- Golden Nugget

11:45-12:00 Closing

- Pass High-Five
- Pass out Creative Notebooks/Markers
- Board Creative Express to see family members

Creative Task: Decorate Outside of notebook and write or draw about how the child felt about their first day of drama group. (Send home emotion cue cards)

September 23rd - Theme: Feelings on the Inside

1. Participants will acknowledge group members and build rapport.
2. Participants will explore and discuss listening to their bodies (sensations and feelings)

10:00-10:15

- Check-In with puppet
- Share Creative Notebooks

10:15-10:30 Warm-Up(s)

- "Hello There" Song (teaching ASL signs for a visual prompt)
- *Dance:* Fear, Anger, Sadness, Joy - expressing feelings through movement (child & buddy partner exploration)

10:30-11:00 Main Activity 1

- Drama Exercise to Embody Feelings, Narrate Story

11:00-11:10 Snack/Restroom**11:10-11:50 Main Activity 2**

- Story Enactment
-

11:50-12:00 Closing

- *Pass the Silly Face!*
- Board the Creative Express

Creative Task: Write about an animal that you see through the week

September 30th - Theme: Verbal and Nonverbal Skills

1. *Participants will be able to engage in reciprocal communication*
2. *Participants enhance their social skills and emotional intelligence via puppetry and pretend play with partners.*

10:00-10:30 Check-In

- Storytelling (Personal Sharing) with the puppet
- Share creative task

10:30-10:40 Warm-Up(s)

- "Hello There" Song w ASL
- Movement Exercise (*Animal Explorations*)

10:40-11:05 Main Activity 1

- Speech Lesson- Speaking Stone

11:05-11:15 Snack/Restroom**11:15-11:45 Main Activity 2**

- Drama Component- Puppet Conversations

11:45-12:00 Closing

- Feelings Narrative via Movement

Creative Task: Draw picture of how you feel one day

October 7th - Theme: Mind-Body Connections

1. *Participants will learn how to take what they are thinking and express it in their movement*
2. *Participants will create a story using imagination and expression.*
3. *Participants will utilize reciprocal language skills in play-based exercises through questioning other participants*

10:00-10:20 Check-In

- "Hello There" Song with ASL

- Emotion Dance

10:20 - 10:30 Warm-Up(s)

- Silly Aerobics

10:30-11:00 Main Activity I

- Express Yourself- Talking about Emotions

10:50-11:00 Snack/Restroom**11:00-11:40 Main Activity 2**

- Creative Drama Enactment- Feeling Book

11:40-12:00 Closing

- Kids Yoga
- Pass High Five
- Board the Creative Express

Creative Task: Ask family members or friends how they are feeling a draw a picture that depicts that

October 14 - Theme: Speakin' and Groovin'

1. *Participants will identify appropriate voice inflection to convey emotions*
2. *Participants will engage in appropriate tempo in their speech so others may understand them*
3. *Participants will enact a story trying to embody the character they are portraying*

10:00-10:10 Check-In

- "Hello There" Song with ASL

10:10 - 10:30 Warm-Up(s)

- Silly Aerobics
- Animal Explorations

10:30-11:00 Main Activity I

- Vocal Inflection & Tempo Activity

10:50-11:00 Snack/Restroom**11:00-11:50 Main Activity 2**

- Story Enactment- Mushroom in the Rain

11:50-12 Closing

- Board Creative Express
- Pass the High Five

Creative Task: Make sock puppets and tell a story

October 21st- Story Development

1. *Participants will generate ideas for the play when given prompts*
2. *Participants will organize the story in correct sequence from beginning to end*

10-10:20 Check-In

- "Hello There" Song with ASL
- Check in with Puppet

10:20-10:30 Warm-Up

- Silly Aerobics

10:30-10:50 Main Activity 1

- Story sequencing

10:50-11:05 Snack Break/Restroom**11:05-11:50 Main Activity 2**

- Mad Libs Story Activity and Enactment

11:50-12 Closing

- Pass the High Five
- Board Creative Express

Creative Task: Share a story with a family member or friend

October 28th- Reading Day

1. *Participants will participate in reading a script and will be assisted as necessary*
2. *Participants will use a good volume when speaking their lines*
3. *Participants will practice turn taking with movement passing*

10-10:15 Check-In

- "Hello There" Song with ASL
- Puppet Check-In

10:15-10:30 Warm-Up

- Pass the Movement

10:30-10:50 Main Activity 1

- Narrate the script

10:50-11:05- Snack/Restroom**11:05-11:50- Main Activity 2**

- Participants read script
- Discuss story arch

11:50-12 Closing

- High for the week -participant share something they are looking forward to in coming week
- Board Creative Express

Creative Task: Read the script with family member and practice reading lines

November 4th- Get on Your Feet

1. *Participants will engage in assisted script reading and be encouraged to make creative choices*
2. *Participants will support fellow peers*

10-10:15 Check-In

- "Hello There" Song with ASL
- Check in with Puppet

10:15-10:30 Warm-up

- Read through script again

10:30-11 Main Activity 1

- Begin to stage script

11-11:15- Snack/Restroom

11:15-11:50- Main Activity 2

- Continue staging and reviewing

11:50-12 Closing

- Participant share a moment they enjoyed during that session
- Board Creative Express

Creative Task: Review script with family and share staging

November 11th- Memory Time

1. *Participants will receive strategies that help with memorization and sequencing*
2. *Participants will follow directions and make creative choices on characters and staging*

10-10:15 Check-In

- "Hello There" Song with ASL
- Puppet Check-In

10:15-10:30 Warm-Up(s)

- Pass the Movement or Silly Aerobics

10:30-11 Main Activity 1

- Finish Staging with memory strategies

11-11:15 Snack/Restroom**11:15-11:50 Main Activity 2**

- Review staging and work on line memorization
- Discuss sequence and story arch

11:50-12 Closing

- Pass the High Five
- Board Creative Express

Creative Task: Memorize lines and work on expression when speaking lines

November 18th- Body Language

1. *Participants will execute nonverbal communication to aid their verbal expressions*
2. *Participants will engage in the story being told for 30 minutes*

10-10:15 Check-In

- "Hello There" Song with ASL
- Puppet Check-In

10:15-10:30 Warm-Up

- Magic Wand Movement Exercise

10:30-11 Main Activity 1

- Run the script

11-11:15- Snack/Restroom**11:15-11:50- Main Activity 2**

- Do run of script focusing on expression and nonverbal communication

11:50- 12 Closing

- Pass the affirmation
- Board Creative Express

Creative Task: Practice Script and Movements with lines

November 25th- Finale

1. *Participants will apply language techniques they have learned to performance*
2. *Participants will enact the story that has been rehearsed for an audience*

10-10:10 Warm-Up

- "Hello There" Song with ASL

10:10-10:40 Dress Rehearsal

- Review script and staging

10:40-10:55 Snack/Restroom

- Parents can arrive at this time

11-11:30 Performance

11:30-12 Awards

Appendix E
Hello There Song

*This song can go to any tune

Leader: Hello There!

Echo: Hello There!

Leader: How are you?

Echo: How are you?

Leader: It's so good

Echo: It's so good

Leader: To see you

Echo: To see you

Leader: We'll sing and

Echo: We'll sing and

Leader: Be happy

Echo: Be happy

Everyone: That we're all here together again!

Appendix F
Emotional Cue Cards

Link to Print: <http://www.mockeri.com/emotions-flash-cards/>



Embarrassed



Scared



Confused



Confident



In Love



Sad



Surprised



Angry



Happy



Excited



Sick



Shy

Appendix G
Very Brave Adventurer Mad Libs

The Very Brave Adventurer

Once upon a time in the kingdom of _____, there lived a(n)
Noun
 _____ adventurer named _____. The kingdom was a peaceful
Adjective Child's name
 kingdom, where the animals roamed free and the food was plentiful.
 Ruling over the kingdom was _____ King Nicklaus and Queen
Adjective
 Lillian. Everyone in the kingdom was happy, until one day a villain
 named Mr. Mean came into the castle and stole the sacred _____.
Noun
 King Nicklaus and Queen Lillian didn't know what to do. They
 wandered the countryside for days trying to come up with a plan. Finally,
 they met _____. _____ told Nicklaus not to worry, and set
Child's name Child's name
 off to take back what Mr. Mean had taken from the Kingdom.
 _____ hopped on a _____ and rode it to the _____ cave
Child's name Animal Adjective
 where Mr. Mean lived. _____ tip toed into the cave then yelled
Child's name
 _____. Mr. Mean was startled and dropped the sacred item.
Phrase
 _____ grabbed it and raced back to King Nicklaus. Nicklaus was so
Child's name
 grateful that he gave _____ a _____ in exchange
Child's name Adjective Noun
 for his appreciation. Everyone in the kingdom was so happy that they
 celebrated by eating delicious food. Mr. Mean never returned to the
 kingdom again and everyone live happily ever after!

The End

Appendix H

The Very Brave Adventurers

By: Tracena Marie and Elizabeth White

Scene 1

Narrator 1

Once upon a time in the kingdom of Matuni, traveled brave adventurers named Cora, Josh, and Lucy.

Narrator 2

The kingdom was a peaceful kingdom, where the animals roamed free.

Two actors act out being animals.

Narrator 1

Ruling over the kingdom was strange King Nicklaus

Narrator 2

and Queen Lily.

Narrator 1

Everyone in the kingdom was happy.

The king, queen, and princess create a happy pose.

Narrator 2

Until one day, a villain named Puppet Master snuck into the castle

*The villain sneaks on-stage. We see the princess sleeping.
The villain captures the princess.*

Narrator 1

and stole the enchanted princess!

Narrator 2

The next morning, the King and Queen were eating breakfast

Narrator 1

When they heard squawking from their pet parrot.

Parrot

someone can use the parrot puppet

Help! The princess is missing!

Queen

What?!

King

What do you mean the princess is missing?

Parrot

I went to wake her for breakfast, but she was nowhere in sight!

King

Did you check the garden?

Queen

Oh, yes. She sure does enjoy her morning strolls.

Parrot

She is not there! Not in her room. Not in the garden --- oh what if a giant creature stole her in the night?!

King

Let us not panic. We will find her.

Queen

Yes, you're right. She most likely went into town for a fresh, hot loaf of bread.

Parrot

The princess' horse is still in the stable, your majesty.

(The king and queen give each other a look of worry.)

Narrator 1

The king and queen begin to worry!

Narrator 2

For days, they search for the princess in the countryside.

King and Queen

Princess Emily! Princess Emily!

Narrator 2

They ask all around town if anyone has seen the missing princess.

Narrator 1

They search for many, many days until one day...

The king and queen notice a group of friends traveling together.

King

Excuse me. Please will you help us?

Cora

We can try.

Queen

We are looking for our daughter. Princess Emily.

King

(showing the friends a picture of the princess)

Have you seen her around this part of the countryside?

Josh

Cora, Lucy didn't we see someone that looks like the princess traveling toward the Northland Waters?

Lucy

Yea! Near the rocky caves!

Cora

Don't worry, King! We will try to find your princess.

Lucy

We are the brave adventurers! We can do this!

King

Oh thank you, my subjects! The queen and I will continue to search around the castle. Please take my elephant to make your journey easier.

Josh

You want us to ride your elephant?!?

Lucy

Wow! Cool!

Cora

Thank you, your majesties.

Narrator 1

The three friends set off to find Princess Emily

Narrator 2

Little did they know that their journey was taking them to the cave of the Puppet Master!

Narrator 1

The puppet master cast spells on people

Narrator 2

That made them follow his every move

Transition to the Puppet Masters Cave

Scene 2- Puppet Masters Liar**Princess**

Please sir, let me go!

Song begins

Princess

What is happening to me?

Her body begins to feel funny and the Puppet Master does dance moves that the princess must copy. She is under his spell.

Princess

Please, sir! Break this spell so I can stop dancing. I am getting tired.

Princess and puppet master freeze in a dance pose

Narrator 1

The three friends have come to the cave of the Puppet Master

Narrator 2

Jacob reads the sign outside the cave

Lucy (whisper voice)

Welcome to The Puppet Master's Cave - Enter if you dare.

Josh (whisper voice)

Do you think the princess is in the cave?

Cora (whisper voice)

I don't know but maybe we should go find out.

Narrator 1

The friends tiptoe toward the cave only to be stopped by the guard, Poe.

Narrator 2

Poe was demi-god that protected the cave.

Poe

Who goes there?

Cora

We are the brave adventurers. We have come for the princess.

Lucy

Do you know where she is?

Poe

She is inside the cave with the Puppet Master.

Lucy

Great! We are going to go in and bring her home.

Lucy tries to walk past Poe. Poe stops her.

Poe

I can't let you pass. I have instructions to guard the cave.

Josh tries another tactic

Josh

What is your name, sir?

Poe

Poe

Josh

Mr. Poe we really need to save our friend. Pretty please with a cherry on top let us pass.

Poe

No!

(To the tune of "You're Welcome" from *Moana*)

I see what's happening, yea!

We're face to face at the entrance to the cave.

You cannot get past, so don't even try

Or the brave adventurers will cry

Lucy

Hey Poe! Look over here!

Lucy distracts Poe while Josh and Cora run past. When Josh and Cora enter the cave, the princess is being controlled by the puppet master. Josh and Cora gasp really loud, which scares the Puppet Master and the princess is taken out of the trance.

Puppet Master

Who's there?

Josh and Cora

Princess we're here to save you!

Lucy comes running into the cave being chased by Poe.

Poe

Come back here!

Lucy

Ahhhh!

Poe runs into the Puppet Master and they fall to the ground. The kids grab the princess while Poe and The Puppet Master are on the ground.

Josh

Come on, Princess! Let's go!

Narrator 1

The three friends grab the princess and run as fast as they can out of the cave.

Narrator 2

They hop on the elephant and go back to the kingdom. When they arrive back at the kingdom the king and queen were so happy!

Scene 3- Back at the Kingdom

King

My princess!

Princess

Mom, Dad, I am so glad to be home!

Queen

We didn't know if we would see you ever again.

They embrace.

Queen (gratefully)

You brave adventurers! We can never thank you enough for what you have done for us!

King

We will throw a celebration in the kingdom to welcome home our daughter and you three will be the honored guest.

Lucy, Josh, Cora

Wow! Thank you, your majesty!

Brave Adventurers are cheering and stop when they see the Puppet Master and Poe enter the room. Princess hides behind parents. King sees the evil characters.

King

Guards! Guards! Arrest these gentlemen!

Poe

Wait! We came to apologize. Right Puppet Master?

Puppet Master

Yea!

Poe

We are sorry we stole the princess. Can you ever forgive us?

The king, queen, and princess are thinking really hard and then the princess walk forward.

Princess

I forgive you both. Everyone deserves another chance to make good choices.

Queen

If the princess forgives you, I forgive you.

King

Me too.

Lucy, Josh, Cora

Us three.

King

Let the party begin!

Narrator 2

So the kingdom had a party for a whole month!

Narrator 1

With delicious food and dancing! And everyone in the kingdom lived.....

Everyone (All together)

Happily Ever After!

Music plays and everyone dances.

The End.

